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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#) [CA](#)
SUBJECT: CANADA EXTENDS TROOP MANDATE IN AFGHANISTAN
THROUGH 2011

REF: A. OTTAWA 0303
[1](#)B. OTTAWA 0270
[1](#)C. OTTAWA 0107

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reason 1.4 (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Canada's House of Commons on March 13 adopted by a vote of 198 to 77 a government motion to extend the mandate of the Canadian Forces (CF) in NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Kandahar through 2011, contingent upon NATO's provision of 1,000 more troops as well as adequate helicopter and UAV support. All members of the ruling Conservative Party and the Official Opposition Liberal Party who were present voted in favor, while all members of the New Democratic Party and Bloc Quebecois present voted against.

[1](#)2. (U) Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier explained to reporters that Canada hoped that the additional troops will come from a single partner country, but Defence Minister Peter MacKay separately said in an interview that "we will take what we can get." Both emphasized the importance of a "minimum" of 1,000 additional troops to support the CF. Bernier underscored the importance that this was not now a Conservative or Liberal policy, but rather a truly "Canadian" position.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: This vote is another stunning victory for the minority government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and reflected again the political wisdom of forming an advisory panel headed by former Liberal Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister John Manley (ref c). The Panel's recommendations formed the core of the ultimate government position, mildly modified by input from a Liberal Party alternate bill. While setting a final end-date for the CF of December 2011 (with withdrawals to begin in July 2011), the government has not ruled out the possibility that a successor government might seek a further extension if circumstances warranted it and if there were a NATO consensus to do so at this later date. The March 13 vote will leave PM Harper in a more confident position to participate in the Bucharest Summit, and will also strengthen his calls for NATO partners to come up with the additional support. However, the Conservatives may have slightly boxed themselves into a corner by creating a now "magic number" of 1,000 more troops, and will be hard-pressed to demonstrate NATO solidarity to the Canadian public if the additional numbers are below this level.

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